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ABSTRACT

The articles included in this special journal supplement represent a view of special education which is concerned with the adjustment of the emotionally disturbed learner within varied social-interactional frameworks or settings, as noted in the guest editorial by Charles Chrystal. "Beyond Therapy and Research: Helping Emotionally Troubled Children within the Political Process," by Anthony Jackson, calls for greater political involvement on the part of special educators. "An Ecological Approach to Identifying and Validating Social Skills for Students with Emotional Disturbance," by Patrick Schloss et al., offers guidelines to enhance the adjustment of students with emotional disturbance to mainstreamed educational environments. "Education of Emotionally Disturbed Children: Is It School or Treatment?" by Bruce Nisbet and Michael Lucow, describes the overlap of clinical and educational services, using case studies to illustrate the difficulties faced by administrators and staff. "Expanding the Horizon: Sibling Contributions to the Ecological Model," by Sharon Farago Cramer, writes about siblings' influence upon classroom behavior of emotionally disturbed students and advocates involving siblings in the treatment process. "Ecological Assessment Procedures for Emotionally Disturbed Students," by Mark Posluszny, provides a framework for interventional decision making. "The Ecology of Helping: Conflict or Collaboration?" by Charles Chrystal, examines approaches to helping, suggests reasons for conflicts among helpers, and discusses conflict resolution techniques. (JDD)

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ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE

—JOURNAL WITHIN A JOURNAL—

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ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE

GUEST EDITORIAL

by Charles A. Chrystal

It is truly an honor to serve as guest editor to *Perceptions*, and to have worked closely with Everett Kelley in the process. My contacts with 'Ed' and others in ANYSEED over several years have been most gratifying. It is a great pleasure to work with individuals devoted to quality education for emotionally disturbed and behaviorally disordered students, and to know that those students benefit from their concern and professionalism. My personal thanks to Ed and many others who have made ANYSEED the outstanding organization it is today.

This issue of *Perceptions* is entitled, "Ecological Perspectives on Emotional Disturbance." The articles included represent a view of special education which is concerned with the adjustment of the learner within varied social-interactional frameworks or settings. The ecological viewpoint holds that disturbance must always be considered within a context, and that to study a child outside of his environment provides an incomplete understanding of relevant issues and may prove misleading.

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) has described four types of ecology important to special education: the *macrosystem* which designates the over-arching socio-cultural environment; the *exosystems* which operate "around" the individual and have an indirect effect upon behavior; the *microsystems* which comprise settings for behavioral interaction; and, the *mesosystems* which provide the structural or organizational contexts for *microsystems*. Here, we are concerned with all of the ecologies Bronfenbrenner describes.

Anthony W. Jackson of the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, Washington, D.C., depicts the *macrosystem* as one which has not been overly concerned with the mental health of families, children, and youth. His paper calls for greater political involvement on the part of special educators, and warns of potential consequences should we fail to participate in political processes which ultimately affect what we do within our classrooms.

Patrick J. Schloss, newly appointed Chairperson of the Exceptional Education Department, State University College at Buffalo, together with his colleagues Mary W. Schmidt (Assistant Professor of Special Education, Eastern Carolina University) and Maureen A. Smith (Instructor, Department of Special Education, State University College at Geneseo) note the importance of developing student social skills within the school as a *mesosystem*. Social skills must be developed not only within discrete environments, but must be made functional across settings.

Bruce C. Nisbet, Director of Gateway United Methodist Youth and Family Services, Williamsville, N.Y., writes with Michael Lucow, Program Director, about their new Day School/Treatment Program for youth with emotional problems. The overlap of clinical and educational services is described informatively and the *mesosystemic* issues involved creating such a program are described humorously. Case examples are used to illustrate the many difficulties faced by administrators and staff working with ED/BD students.

Sharon Farago Cramer, Assistant Professor of Exceptional Education at the State University College at Buffalo, writes about the family as an *exosystem* which has a profound influence upon the emotionally disturbed student's behavior in the classroom. She claims that the teacher can learn much about the family from siblings, and fruitfully involve siblings in the treatment process. Her thesis provides much that is new and creative in the special education of ED/BD students.

The matter of ecological assessment is addressed by Mark Posluszny, Assistant Professor of Exceptional Education at the State University College at Buffalo. He provides a framework for interventional decision-making which has relevance for the school as *mesosystem* and classroom as *microsystem*. As careful assessment is central to educational intervention, the importance of Posluszny's paper for classroom practice is clear.

Finally, I have included a paper of my own which deals with conflict and collaboration among those who would help students with emotional and behavioral problems. It is concerned with the *microsystem* of the classroom and the relationships which may evolve there. The most general theme of the paper is that we need to consolidate our efforts in behalf of the students we serve. And so, we come full circle back to Anthony W. Jackson's concern for increased involvement in special education for children and youth with emotional and behavioral problems.

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Guest Editor – Spring 1988

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BEYOND THERAPY AND RESEARCH: HELPING EMOTIONALLY TROUBLED CHILDREN WITHIN THE POLITICAL PROCESS

by Anthony W. Jackson

In the United States today, the regularity of inadequate mental health care, or no care at all, for children suffering from emotional disturbances is nothing short of alarming. A comprehensive recent study by the United States Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) found that between 7.5 to 9.5 million children – 12 to 15% of all children under 18 – suffer from a mental health problem warranting treatment. Yet 70 to 80% of these children get inappropriate mental health services or simply do not receive services at all.[1]

There is significant concern as well that the number of children and adolescents with mental health problems may be increasing. At a recent hearing of the House Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families, experts from across the nation indicated that while current data sources are inadequate to gauge long-term change in the prevalence and severity of emotional disturbance in children, the increased strains on families in the 1980s – evidenced by high rates of child abuse and neglect, separation and divorce, and children living much of their lives in poverty – appear related to the rapid case load increases and changes in the profile of children presenting for psychiatric evaluation during this decade.[2]

Mental health officials from Erie County, New York, for example, indicated a two-fold increase between 1986–1987 alone in the number of children under 18 who were presented for psychiatric admission in the emergency room of the county hospital. These children are more often younger, more violent, more disturbed; have more serious and multiple problems; and are more likely to be involved with alcohol and drugs. Yet in 1986, fewer than 25% of the number of children estimated to need mental health services were served.[3]

Erie County represents a convenient example of a nationwide phenomenon. There can be no doubt that across the country, the resources necessary to effectively serve troubled infants, children and adolescents are not in place. During the 1985–86 school year, approximately 377,000 emotionally disturbed children – less than 1% of the total school population – received mental health services under PL 94-142, the Education of the Handicapped Act.[4] As Congressman George Miller, Chairman of the Select Committee noted, "Our government has accepted no obligation to ensure that children with mental health problems receive the care they need. And our progress in improving mental health care for children during this decade has been modest at best."[5]

State governments have also been slow to accept responsibility for emotionally disturbed children and adolescents. In a 1981 state-by-state survey, Knitzer found only 21 state departments of mental health had even one full-time staff person assigned to child and adolescent mental health.[6]

But the problem of inadequate mental health services for children is not simply a lack of federal or state commitment. Inadequate coordination between mental health, social service, education and other agencies severely impedes the effective utilization of the resources that do exist. Parents seeking help for their children, who themselves suffer unfair stigmatization and blame as the parents of an emotionally impaired child, are often "bounced" from agency to agency, resulting in long delays, and ineffective, piecemeal service delivery.

Current insurance and state reimbursement policies also drive the choice of treatment for emotionally impaired children towards the extreme and more costly alternative of hospitalization, when other arrangements that are generally not reimbursable would be more effective and less expensive. The aforementioned survey by Knitzer found, for example, that between 40–60% of children who were in psychiatric hospitals were there by default, because less restrictive programs, such as day treatment or intensive in-home crisis intervention services were not available.

Professor Leonard Saxe, principal author of the OTA report noted:

> The (reimbursement) system does not provide the continuity of care and provision of out-patient services that should be the central feature of a mental health system. The reimbursement system is distorting conceptions of mental health in an attempt to control health costs. It is neither successful in controlling costs or in providing adequate services.[7]

The result is a mental health care system for children that primarily addresses, that is, pays for, treatment of the most extreme problems, many of which might have been ameliorated through early, community-based, family-focused interventions.

There is an even more tragic irony experienced by many parents of children whose emotional disturbances are truly best served through placement in a residential setting. In many states, parents of emotionally disturbed children in need of placement must give up custody of the child to the state – a policy which in some cases requires a charge of child abuse or neglect. At the Select Committee hearing, a parent expressed the anguish caused by this dilemma:

> I had not abused or neglected my child. On the contrary, I had used every bit of my energy and where-with-all in a desperate search for help . . . (The child) now had to be adjudicated dependent, because, I quote, "he was without proper parental care or control." This injustice, all too commonplace, is a grave indictment of our mental health system.[8]

Clearly, the system for treating emotionally impaired children in this country is seriously flawed. But at this point perhaps you are asking what the point is in sharing this with an audience that is already involved in trying to help troubled children and adolescents through research, teaching and clinical practice? Why preach to the saved?

Simply put, while research, education and therapy are unquestionably necessary, the barriers to a more effective mental health treatment system for children are largely political. The elimination of those barriers will require, at the very least, a minimal commitment from those who are involved in this field to engage in policy-oriented activities that will lead to change in public and private mental health laws and regulations.

There is a pervasive sense within many academic communities that advocacy on the part of the subjects of one's research or teaching is somehow ill-suited to the role of scholar. It should not be, and the urgency of need among millions of under-served and ill-served emotionally impaired children and adolescents demands that it must not be.

Advocacy for emotionally impaired children does not require queuing up to testify before government hearings, although this is certainly an effective method of infusing public policy debate with accurate information and sound judgement from those closest to the problems of disturbed children. At a minimum, though, it does require making policymakers aware of the resource problems and misguided priorities that currently deny effective treatment for millions of young people.

Who, if not the professionals directly affected, can speak more knowledgeably about the impact of reductions in federal funding for mental health services during this decade? Since the Community Mental Health Centers Act was repealed in 1981 and folded into the Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health Block Grant, federal funding for mental health services has dropped from $277.6 million in fiscal year 1981 to $248 million in fiscal year 1987. The National Institute of Mental Health clinical training program has been cut by 85% over the past seven years – from $70 million in 1980 to $15 million in 1987. Of that $15 million, only $3.3 million is used for training child mental health professionals. Are these acceptable responses to as many as 7.5 million under-served or inappropriately served emotionally impaired children?

Just as importantly, advocacy on the part of emotionally impaired children means making decision-makers aware of the successful alternatives that exist that could form the basis of a vastly improved mental health system for children. In Ventura County, California, for example, an interagency community-based system of care for the most needy, emotionally impaired children has reduced state hospitalization by 25%, saving an average of $428,000 annually, and reduced out-of-county, court-ordered treatment placements by 46%.[9]

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AN ECOLOGICAL APPROACH TO IDENTIFYING AND VALIDATING

by Patrick J. Schloss, Mary W. Schmidt

Within an ecological perspective, an individual is viewed as a participant in a social system, assuming both expressive and receptive roles during social transactions involving peers and authority figures. Further, these transactions are highly complex because they occur in a variety of settings (Kauffman, 1981). Depending upon their age, individuals are expected to function appropriately in residential, vocational, community, transportation, and academic settings.

One dimension of academic settings that is becoming increasingly important to educators of students with emotional disturbance is the mainstream classroom. This setting has the potential to provide these students with opportunities to interact with and be accepted by their non-handicapped peers. Unfortunately, research has shown interaction and acceptance do not always occur (Bryan, 1976; Gresham, 1981, 1982). One possible explanation for this outcome is the limited ability of these learners to understand or interpret correctly the nonverbal cues used by their peers, including facial expressions, body language, and gestures. Another possibility is these students frequently demonstrate limited skills in expressive communication (Smith, 1987). Either factor can inhibit the development of social relationships. Ultimately, this deficit may adversely impact the perceptions and attitudes of other people toward learners who are emotionally disturbed.

An ecological perspective suggests additional reasons why students with emotional disturbance continue to experience difficulties in the development of social relationships. It is possible that, when designing intervention programs to promote social development, educators fail to consider all facets of the complex social system in which these students must function. This failure may result in gaps in students' knowledge and limit their ability to participate successfully in a variety of settings. These problems may be prevented through the implementation of social skill training programs that reflect an ecological orientation.

Research reports over the last decade have demonstrated that social skill training may have a positive impact on the adjustment of children and youth with emotional disturbance (Schloss, Schloss, & Harris, 1984; Smith, Schloss, & Schloss, 1984). One of the hallmarks of these demonstrations has been the focus on precise objectives (Turner, Hersen, & Bellack, 1978). It is possible that the outcome of future demonstrations could be enhanced by the incorporation of objectives developed from an ecological framework. There is little doubt that qualitative aspects of skills selected for training may have a critical role in determining the ultimate benefit of intervention for the learner. Unfortunately, the professional literature does not readily offer empirical guidelines for selecting social skill training objectives. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to describe an ecologically based procedure for identifying and validating the social skills that may enhance the adjustment of students with emotional disturbance to mainstreamed educational environments.

Conceptual Issues

Social skills have been defined in a variety of ways. Gresham (1983) notes that social skills and adaptive behavior are a part of the larger construct of social competence. Within this construct, adaptive behavior focuses on self-efficiency and independent functioning while social skills deal with interpersonal functioning and social acceptance. In the classroom, appropriate social skills are associated with children's success in interacting with and being accepted by their peers. Socially competent individuals are able to distinguish socially relevant cues and conduct themselves in a manner that results in reinforcing outcomes (Schloss, 1984).

Social skill objectives should result from the identification of discrete competencies most likely to produce satisfaction for the individual in functional environments. From a student's perspective, the hallmarks of appropriate social skill objectives are their relevance and currency (Schloss, Smith, Goldsmith, & Selinger, 1984). *Relevance* refers to the direct association between: (a) the instructional objective developed in school; and (b) skills required by the student to gain satisfaction in natural environments. Asking questions and reacting to criticism are relevant skills in that they facilitate adjustment to school by elementary students who are emotionally disturbed. On the other hand, practicing assertive behaviors with taxi drivers may not be relevant as it is unlikely students this age would independently use such a service. *Currency* refers to the extent to which the skill is of immediate use to the student. For example, socially appropriate expressions of feelings may be a current objective for elementary students with emotional disturbance because this skill is frequently required in the settings in which they participate. Conversely, responding to interview questions posed during mock employment interviews is not a current objective for these students as it is unlikely they will be applying for a job in the near future.

A related consideration in the conceptualization of social skills is the extent to which the skills are applicable to the variety of environments and subenvironments in which students with emotional disturbance participate. These students may be expected to function in residential, academic, recreational, vocational, and transportation environments. Skills that may be relevant in any one of these environments may not be appropriate for another. For example, a secondary learner may need to criticize the performance of a waitress in a restaurant; however, criticisms directed toward the individual who employs the learner on a part-time basis may be considered grounds for dismissal.

In addition to the five major environments are the subenvironments in which students must function. For example, the school environment consists of the classroom, the gymnasium, the restroom, the auditorium, the hall, and the office. Social competence may vary slightly within each of these areas. The manner in which a student secures the attention of a classmate during gym class may be considerably different from the techniques used during study hall.

It is essential that the assessment and training of socially skillful behavior among students with emotional disturbance reflect variations across and within environments. Such sensitivity will ensure that these students are fully prepared to demonstrate appropriate behaviors that will be reinforced by others in the environment.

A final conceptual issue involves the nature of the relationship between the participants involved in a social interaction. As is the case within and across environments, these relationships may influence the specific competencies required for successful functioning. Thus, competence in interacting under one set of conditions may not insure competence under others. For example, the ability to interact effectively with siblings may not be related to the ability to interact with peers or authority figures.

Implications

The conceptual issues just presented have major implications for the identification and validation of social skills for students who are emotionally disturbed. Professionals must consider the impact of setting and participant variables upon the development of social skill training objectives. Specifically, these variables may influence the exact nature of the social skill being targeted for development, the conditions under which it occurs, and the criterion level required for mastery.

The multifaceted nature of social skills requires professionals to go beyond the traditional method used to identify objectives for an instructional program. Typically, an educator identifies a cognate area, such as mathematics, and selects a skill, such as money management. The skill is further broken down into subskills; such as identifying coins, their corresponding values, and equivalencies; selecting appropriate amounts for making purchases; and counting change. The educator need not consider the influence of specific environments or participants upon the development of these skills. Task demands remain constant regardless of the individuals involved or the settings in which monetary transactions occur.

SOCIAL SKILLS FOR STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE

and Maureen A. Smith

The process may be inefficient for professionals planning a social skill development program for students with emotional disturbance. The conceptual issues presented earlier suggest social skills vary as a function of the environment or the participants. Therefore, another approach, more suited to the diverse nature of social skill development, is warranted. One possibility is an approach based on an ecological model.

An Ecological Perspective

Assessment based on an ecological perspective involves a thorough analysis of the entire social system in which the learner must function. Intervention is provided not only for the student who is disturbed, but for those individuals present in the home, school, and community (Kauffman, 1981). Unfortunately, time and financial constraints may preclude complete implementation of an ecological approach in programs serving students with emotional disturbance. However, it is possible to utilize some techniques on a limited scale when designing social skill intervention program for these students. For example, assessment can involve an analysis of the social requirements in each setting in which students are expected to function. In addition, significant others in each of these settings can provide vital information concerning their expectations for performance.

The remaining sections of this paper describe an ecological approach for identifying, organizing, and prioritizing social skill objectives for students with emotional disturbance. This framework, presented in Figure 1, illustrates the relationship between participant variables, setting variables, and objectives. The objectives ultimately selected by the educator should reflect the participant and setting variables on the horizontal axis and the behavioral variables on the vertical axis.

Identification of Objectives

Use of an ecological approach in the identification of social skill objectives requires that the educator first consider all the areas in which students with emotional disturbance are expected to participate. It is suggested that the educator begin with an examination of the residential, academic, vocational, recreational, and transportation environments. The exact nature of these settings is directly related to the student's age and severity of emotional disturbance. Generally, it is expected that younger, more able learners will live at home, go to the local public school, not work, and participate in supervised recreational and transportation settings. Older learners, however, may no longer reside at home, may have completed their formal education, may have a job, and may have the opportunity to participate in a wider range of recreational activities. Those who are more severely disturbed may live, work, and play in more restrictive settings. It is imperative that the educator clearly identify the exact nature of these

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	SKILL	SETTING																			
		Class				Hall				Office				Cafeteria				Gym			
		to peer	to adult	from peer	from adult	to peer	to adult	from peer	from adult	to peer	to adult	from peer	from adult	to peer	to adult	from peer	from adult	to peer	to adult	from peer	from adult
Questions	Requesting Information																				
	Favor																				
	Assistance																				
	Invitation																				
Compliments	Global																				
	Appearance																				
	Skill Level																				
	Possession																				
Small Talk	Initiating																				
	Terminating																				
Criticisms	Appearance																				
	Violating Rules																				
	Skill Level																				
	Damaging Property																				

Figure 1. Matrix for identifying social skills.

Continued from page 5

settings so that the social skill objectives selected for training will closely match the expectations within each of these environments.

After identifying the environments, the educator must analyze the social requirements of each. This is best accomplished through observations of individuals already functioning appropriately within each environment. An analysis reported by Schloss and Smith (in press) highlights social skills that may be relevant. These include receptive and expressive abilities in questioning, complimenting, criticizing, and conducting a conversation. In addition, it is critical to note any differences in the social skills displayed as a function of the age and status of the participants.

Assessment of Social Skills

Current levels of social skills can be identified through a series of assessment procedures. Social behavior has been assessed by one of the common behavior measuring devices such as the Vineland Social Maturity Scale (Doll, 1964), and the AAMD Adaptive Behavior Scale (Nihira, Foster, Shellhaus, & Leland, 1974). These instruments are highly limited because they are not standardized with individuals who are emotionally disturbed. Further, they sample only a few behaviors from the vast domain of interpersonal skills. It is likely that some skills critical for the student's adjustment will not be evaluated. Other methods available for assessing current levels of student performance include interviews, self-reports, and rating scales.

Interviews. Behavioral interviews can provide information regarding the interpersonal history of the student, and a discrete sample of the student's interpersonal behavior (Bellack & Hersen, 1978). Van Hasselt, Hersen, Whitehill and Bellack (1979) emphasize the potential benefits of behavioral interviews when combined with other techniques. They suggest that interviews may be effective in accessing information that otherwise would be unattainable. Although historical accounts may be subject to bias resulting from selectivity in recall by the student and subsequent interpretation by the teacher, the student has the potential to provide more data pertinent to the social history than any other source. The student's actual behavioral reactions during the interview situation may allow the educator to sample interpersonal skills such as eye contact, voice qualities, reaction to criticism, and reaction to compliments.

Self-report inventories. Self-report inventories are the most frequently employed assessment procedures used in social skill research (Bellack, 1979). Unfortunately, they suffer the same empirical limitations as interviews. First, self-report inventories require an accurate self-appraisal of performance. The complexity of social interactions may not be easily quantified by the student. Second, the questions raised and accompanying response selections in the inventory may have different meanings for different students. Therefore, a response from one student may not be compared to the response of another. Third, responses on the questionnaire may be influenced by the expectations of the educator and student. Withstanding these limitations, self-report procedures have been described as being a highly economical means of gaining valuable data when combined with other measures (Bellack, 1979).

Ratings. One of the techniques that may be particularly useful to teachers in identifying social skill objectives are ratings. A number of instruments have been developed to provide standardized data for these purposes. Included are sociometric ratings, direct observations, interviews, and questionnaire formats. Van Hesselt, Hersen, Whitehall, and Bellack (1979) have identified four advantages to these recording techniques: (1) they can be used quickly and economically, (2) the data are easily quantified, (3) a wide range of responses may be evaluated, and (4) they may easily be used as a dependent variable in research studies.

Validation of Objectives

The preceding instruments are useful in initially selecting social skill priorities. Once selected, however, social validation may be used to confirm that the behavior change anticipated meets the demands of an individual's personal social context (Wolf, 1978). The first step in the validation of social skill objectives has already been taken if the educator has observed other competent individuals completing the social requirements of each environment. This step ensures that each objective and its component parts or criterion level actually reflect the expectations held by others in that environment. Table 1 presents receptive and expressive components of socially skillful behavior required for critical remarks involving peers and authority figures.

Table 1. Components for Criticism

Receptive Components	Expressive Components
1. Acknowledges/Apologizes. 2. Offers an alternative. Examples: "I'm sorry. I'll clean it up." "I understand you don't like my haircut. I think it looks nice so I will keep it this way."	1. States the problem. 2. Identifies an alternative. Example: "You dropped the glass. You need to get a broom and sweep up the broken glass."

The second step in socially validating training goals is to conduct direct observations of the student's daily behavior. This is considered to be the most valid approach to quantifying social performance because the data produce a direct record of the individual's responses. Two approaches to conducting direct observations may be considered. The first is to observe subjects in vivo during a specified period of time or during critical incidents. The second alternative is to develop analog observations by arranging a situation that is expected to produce an opportunity for the student to engage in social skill responses. Use of either of these procedures will produce data indicating the precise level of a student's performance. These data can be used to compare the student's current level of social competence with the levels of others. This information enables the teacher to determine how the target social skill of the student with emotional disturbance compares with the skill of the cohort group. If the levels of the two are approximately the same, the hypothesized need for intervention is not supported. However, if the levels are different, intervention may be justified.

Figure 2 uses data from behavioral observations to compare the self-expressive skills of a student with emotional disturbance with the skills of his cohort group. The number of times in which students initiated conversations was recorded for each of 10 students in a mainstreamed classroom was recorded. This produced an average of 30 statements. Adding and subtracting one standard deviation to this mean produced a range of 25 to 35. The student with emotional disturbance was observed under the same conditions. He averaged 22 statements, with a range of 12 to 32. Comparison of these data with those of the cohort group justifies a need for intervention. One indicator of the effectiveness of the intervention program will be an increase in the target student's response rate comparable to the range established by the cohort group (e.g. from 25 to 35 statements).

In addition to determining the quantitative nature of the student's response rate, it is also possible to identify the qualitative features of his responses. Careful observation of nonhandicapped students may indicate they initiate a conversation by using the other participant's name and asking a polite question or making a comment. Observation of the target student may indicate that he initiates a conversation by using an inappropriate comment. Therefore, a second indicator of the effectiveness of the intervention program will be the use of appropriate methods of initiating a conversation.

Summary

The implementation of P.L. 94-142 mandates that, to the greatest extent possible, students with disabilities be educated in the least restrictive environment. For many students, this placement could be the regular class. Success experienced in this placement could hinge on the use of appropriate social skills. Unfortunately, many students with emotional disturbance, due to the nature or severity of their handicap, may display social skill deficits. Intervention programs designed to address student needs may be less than effective if educators fail to consider the complexity of the social system in which students must function. This situation may be remedied by use of an ecological approach to develop social skill intervention programs. The process outlined here provides the educator of students with emotional disturbance with a means for both identifying and validating the social skills necessary for success across a variety of environments.

Submitted by:
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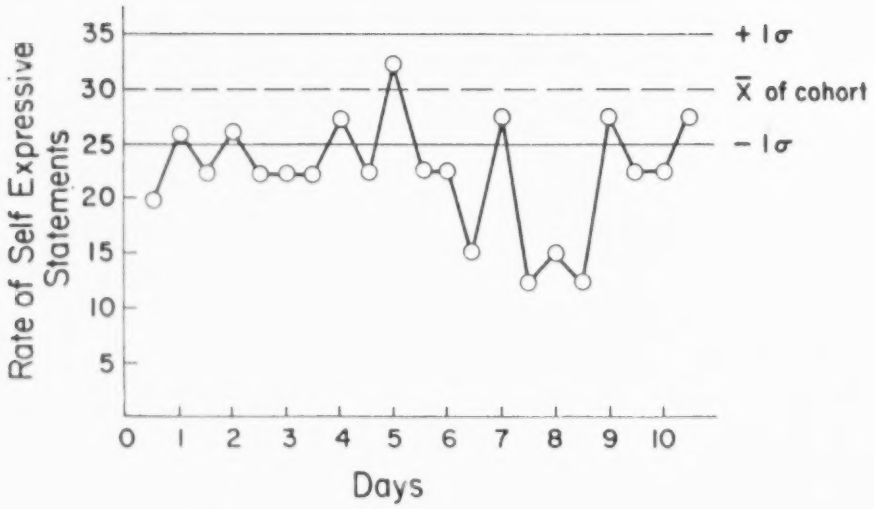

Figure 2. Social comparison of social skills between a student who is emotionally disturbed and the peer group before intervention.

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Editor—PERCEPTIONS
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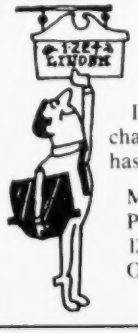
The ANYSEED Executive Board is pleased to announce that the revised ANYSEED Constitution presented within the Summer 1987 issue of PERCEPTIONS was unanimously approved by the voting membership 157-0 and adopted by the Executive Board at the regular business meeting October 16, 1987.

Thought For The Day

Upon hearing a speaker discuss recently the explosion in the handicapped population I was reminded of the comments of Bill Morse on the subject. He said we should "stop pulling kids out of the river downstream and run upstream to see who is throwing them in."



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"EDUCATION OF EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED CHILDREN: IS IT SCHOOL OR TREATMENT?"

by Bruce C. Nisbet and Michael Lucow

On July 6, 1987 Gateways United Methodist Youth and Family Services, a non-profit multi-program private agency located in Williamsville, N.Y. (a suburb of Buffalo) opened a new Day School/Treatment Program. Serving youngsters ages 5–17 years of age who are classified by their home school districts as Emotionally Disturbed (and possibly also Learning Disabled), the program was developed to meet the needs of students in the Western New York area who cannot handle the lack of structure inherent in larger public schools and whose behaviors are unmanageable without enhanced staffing and specialized interventions. The following article is intended to highlight program design issues, as well as identify emerging needs of the program's target population and key the underlying principles guiding staff as they attempt to respond to those needs.

After getting off the special bus at 8:15 A.M., 13 year old Jason decides to make a bee-line for the local mall, rather than enter school. Before running down the road, he flaunts a cigarette and yells obscenities at staff inside, thus assuring his exploits will not go unnoticed.

Eleven year old William has been asked to briefly sit on the sideline during gym class. He is discovered a minute later behind the bleachers, standing over a pool of urine, his pants a little bit wet. He denies having done it.

John, 15, has suddenly begun to make life miserable for staff, especially the female teachers. He refuses to comply with simple requests and has made several caustic comments, often with sexual overtones. His status on the bus is shaky because he recently taunted and then hit a retarded younger child with whom he rides.

You are the director of a private day school/treatment program for students classified as emotionally disturbed. Local school district Committees on Special Education have contracted with you to provide for the educational needs of these youngsters. So, now what?

To say these three circumstances are common would be to stretch the truth a bit. But though the names have been changed, the scenarios are real. "Jason" did reach the mall before the director and a teacher aide caught up with him. When he refused to return to school and then attempted to strike the aide, he was physically restrained on the grass outside a major bank. Police were summoned (only to assuage the fears of passersby and armed bank security personnel); we did not want the police to intervene directly, despite Jason's demands to "Arrest me!". Jason had been trying to get himself kicked out of school since day one, but especially so after the first week because that was the longest he had lasted in two previous day placements. Now facing a tenth day of school and desperate to confirm his feelings that he was not worth the time and trouble, Jason was pulling out all the stops. We were equally determined to show him that this time he could not force another rejection from programming, and we brought him back to campus, where he spent the rest of the school day waiting us out. We waited too, for some visible sign that Jason would give up the self-defeating struggle. We had help, because just when it seemed we couldn't handle him after all, his mother phoned to say she had already seen some subtle changes at home. "Whatever it is you're doing," she appealed, "please keep it up." With our resolve buttressed, we told Jason he wouldn't be going home on the bus, that we would call his parents to pick him up when we felt he was ready. A few hours later Jason apologized for his behavior. We were relieved, as was Jason's father, who soon after came to drive him home. It seemed to us that Jason too was relieved, though he exhausted himself trying not to show it.

"William," caught almost literally with his pants down, begrudgingly cleaned the mess he continued to insist was not his. A call to his adoptive mother revealed that the night before, William had been contacted for the first time in six years by his biological mother. He was given veto power by his adoptive parents, but had said yes, he would go to see his natural mother the following weekend. William's subsequent behavior in school served as a protest, however, calling attention to the difficulty he faced with his planned visit. Helping William and family to recognize this protest became the central task of the teaching and clinical staff in the days that followed.

Similarly, "John's" alarming behavior convinced us that something was awry. Yet for a week or two he would not tell us anything, despite a barrage of staff concern. Finally, though, he confirmed our suspicions by crying, silently. Soon afterwards a family member disclosed sketchy information suggesting that "John" may be a victim of non-familial sexual abuse. John remains reticent, but he has become more approachable in school. We are hoping he can feel safe enough to discuss what is distressing him.

And so, now what?

Despite months of program planning, we could not anticipate exactly what behaviors our students would manifest. We still cannot predict what challenges await us tomorrow. But a framework is evolving to guide and refine the way staff view and make decisions about the new problems that crop up daily. We attempt to view each crisis and each student's disruptive episode as an opportunity for staff to intervene and respond therapeutically. With such a perspective, the program's academic and treatment components can unite in a single, interactive process.

The conceptual and philosophical underpinnings of our program design really grew out of a discussion a few years ago.

The Director of Education and the Director of Clinical Services entered the Program Development meeting with a particularly difficult but very important agenda to resolve. Develop a working philosophy for a proposed new day program with an integrated, multi-disciplinary approach to meeting the academic, emotional, social, and management needs of some of the communities most difficult to serve students.

How to integrate these often competing priorities in a coherent program design? The difficulty of this task was reflected by the initial discussion, which went something like this:

Said the Director of Education:

> "These kids are all classified as ED or LD or both. Our primary job is to educate them and get their academic functioning as close to chronological age as possible. We have to utilize every bit of the daily 5½ hours of classroom instructional time to hammer home the basics these kids don't have."

The Clinical Director responded:

> "Academic functioning is important, but how are these kids going to learn when they are constantly acting out behaviorally their emotional problems? They need to deal with the underlying issues before they are ready to deal with classroom instruction. Programmatically I believe we have to design a system which is heavier on the clinical side than the classroom side."

The Educational Director:

> "Sure, we need a treatment component to deal with those issues, but shouldn't this new program be primarily educational?"

The Clinical Director:

> "I disagree. I think the priority is treatment – both for the student and his parents. It was the students' behavior that led them to being expelled from every public school program before they got here – if it was just academics, the public school could address those issues."

Fortunately, neither binding arbitration nor boxing gloves were needed to resolve what could have been a stalemate; ultimately, the reconciliation of the views of the Director of Education and the

Director of Clinical Services resulted in the following program philosophy and design:

1. The Day School/Treatment Program is designed to provide students with a structured environment which is predictable and controlled, yet allows each student to have the freedom and support to express the very problems that bring him/her to the program. Tasks and activities are designed to challenge students and thus stimulate growth while simultaneously minimizing problem-causing situations. Growth can be defined in academic, social, emotional and/or behavioral terms.
2. Treatment is viewed as the cumulative effect of the student's interactions through the environment as described above; therapeutic relationships between student, parents and staff form the foundation for achieving successful treatment outcomes.
3. A therapeutic relationship promotes closeness, honesty and mutual reciprocity while minimizing fears and maximizing strengths. Therapeutic relationships are like any other mutually satisfying relationship except that they are time-limited and goal-directed with the primary purpose of creating opportunities for the student and/or parent to gain greater control and improve the quality of his or her own life. In the Day School/Treatment Program all staff, whether teacher, aide, social worker, etc., are expected to promote the development of their own therapeutic relationship with students and parents.
4. Therapeutic Programming – is the planful structuring of student experiences through activities which provide growth-producing experiences aimed at enhancing self-esteem, self-expression, social skills, academic advancement, and ego-support.

The Gateway Day School/Treatment Program has chosen to utilize an educational model; i.e. classrooms, academic activities and related services to provide the context and the catalyst for treatment as students react to the demands of this environment. It is the interactions through this total milieu which provide the opportunities for the therapeutic responses of both program and staff.

Some of the key components of this model are as follows:

1. **Location and Physical Environment** – the twenty-four student capacity Day School/Treatment Program utilizes an entire five classroom wing of the Lynde School, a complex specifically built for special education located on Gateway's 70 acre campus in Williamsville, N.Y. The four main classrooms are designed for 1:6:1 ratios, allowing for intimacy and security, and are located in close proximity to offices used for counseling, crisis intervention/time-out, and other related services. The fifth classroom is utilized for specials such as Art, Music, Home and Career Skills and Health. These specials are taught in six-week units across the school year by teachers certified in the appropriate specialty. Technology courses are taught in the Industrial Arts Center of the school by a certified technology teacher. The cafeteria, gymnasium, weight room, indoor racquetball court, dance studio, outside playing fields and swimming pool are also utilized as part of the total program.
2. **Services**
   - Daily bus transportation is provided to and from the program by the student's home school district.
   - Twelve month (224 days, 8:30 A.M.–3:00 P.M.) school schedule.
   - Each self-contained classroom has an area for group counseling (sofa furniture in-the-round, seating nine) as well as the traditional academic space consisting of student desks, blackboards etc. This unique arrangement reflects and facilitates the daily transitioning within the classroom between academic work and group counseling. The social worker in conjunction with classroom staff, lead the group counseling process. Students are currently grouped in these classrooms in the following age ranges: 5–8, 9–11, 12–14, and 15–17.
   - Self-contained classroom teachers are all special education certified at either the B.A. or M.A. level. A teacher aide is assigned to each class.
   - Two therapeutic crisis intervention counselors enhance classroom functioning by providing support and preventive interventions to students either in the classroom or in the adjacent crisis intervention/time-out room.
   - Two Master's level social workers who each work with a case load of twelve students and their families. These staff provide ongoing individual and group counseling as well as bi-weekly family counseling at Gateway and/or in the student's home. Social workers' hours are flexible to meet the needs of families and are available after hours for family emergencies.
   - A part-time consulting psychiatrist and psychologist based at the school weekly for individual student assessments, staff consultation, and participation in student progress reviews and planning meetings.
   - A part-time Master's level Art Therapist who provides individual and group counseling to students demonstrating difficulty in benefitting from traditional therapies.
   - Speech and language assessments and services as necessary, on-site.
   - Full-time school nursing services available on-site.
   - Breakfast and lunch served daily to all students.
   - The Curriculum, including specials, is designed to conform to the requirements of the New York State Regents Action Plan. Such curriculum is credit equivalent to K through 12 and permits students to earn credit toward an age-appropriate class placement upon return to public school.
   - Pre-vocational programming is available to students who are behaviorally ready (and at least fourteen years old) through a community-based B.O.C.E.S. Occupational Skills Program. Several students currently are bussed to and from this center daily for pre-vocational educational programming in auto mechanics, horticulture, secretarial skills, etc. as part of their educational plan.
   - Mainstreaming opportunities, including community outings, athletics, special events, and family activities.
   - Daily communication with parents.
   - Parent education/support groups.
   - Advocacy and support for the student and family with regard to educational, legal, financial, vocational, medical, social services, and other needs.
   - Planning for return to home school districts, implemented in close coordination with the students, parents, and the Committee on Special Education.
   - Follow-up services, including supportive counseling/outreach and necessary referrals for a six-month period after the student has left the program, to assure the student's successful transition to the home school.
   - The program is approved by both the New York State Departments of Education and Social Services, and is designed to be an alternative to residential placement. Referrals can be made by the home school district's Committee on Special Education for any student residing within a forty-five mile radius of our campus and who requires the intensive intervention of such a program to address his or her educational/treatment needs.

We take it on faith that one barometer of our success will be our capacity to creatively adapt to the unique and changeable needs of our students. The question is not whether a student can fit into the existing structure so much as whether the program can be stretched and tailored to assimilate that student.

A sense of irony and humor helps. Like when we were called at home by the campus residential staff at 7:00 P.M. after a particularly rough day. "Jason" and "Fred" had hopped out of their school van at a stoplight on the way home; they had waited for day school staff to leave, then snuck onto campus and attempted to smuggle ill-gotten cigarettes to their heart-throb in one of the girls' cottages of the residential treatment program. Residential staff collared the boys and were able to detain them until parents retrieved them. But what to do to preserve their bus privilege and maintain good relations with the veteran (and busy) residential staff? Finally concede that enough is enough and discharge the two? Well, we are trying something new, and so far it seems to have positively affected Fred. We told the boys that in light of their manifest desire to return to campus after school hours, they would each be given an opportunity to come in on a Saturday. They would have to spend time working off the cost of their parents' resultant mileage and repay them the money earned by their work. They would be alone, supervised by a staff member, away from

the residential campus. Fred's mother cautioned that he was grounded for the forseeable future at home, so by bringing him to school we risked providing rewarding for his behavior. Together we decided the best chance of making an impact would be to start early, and so we did. His dad brought him in at 6:30 A.M., and brought him home at 10:30 A.M., or about the time he generally would have arisen from his weekend slumber.

Lest we begin to gloat over this small success with Fred, we now have a new problem. It was just not feasible to bring Jason in on the same Saturday, and he ran away from home before having his turn the following week. He's immune now to being kept after school. This Saturday is the day after Christmas, so whatever action we decide to take will have to wait. By then there will certainly be something else. The litany of behaviors we must address seem to accumulate with interest, like Third World debt; we must constantly decide how long we and the students can afford for his/her "credit" to be extended. Creative behavioral financing, with a great payback (when it works). It is difficult to keep coming up with ways to "restructure" the debt, however, and any suggestions would be welcome.

It is too soon to know the ultimate effect of our approach with students in our charge; the Gateway Day School/Treatment Program is too new. Doubtless the tension created by the simultaneous (real or imagined) demands of education and treatment will not easily be dissipated. There will be days or weeks when teachers do not crack a book, and social workers feel like disciplinarians, yet the blending of students' educational and treatment goals is the crux of our program.

At the four-month point, which happened to be the day before Halloween, first a witch, then a gremlin and next a rabid bat appeared for work: almost every staff member came in disguise. A few students snuck away from home without a costume, but even they donned makeshift outfits after being surrounded for a few hours.

Children who previously could not have fun together without being disruptive or out of hand had a wonderful day. The very act of their learning to have fun together with peers and adults was exceeded in importance that day (and week, for that matter) only by the recognition of staff, parents and the students themselves that they could actually do it. It is this kind of learning and growth, we trust, that will pave the way to a traditional education for our students.

Submitted by:
Bruce C. Nisbet, M.S.W., C.S.W. and Michael Lucow, Ed.M. both from Gateway United Methodist Youth and Family Services, Williamsville, New York.

At the federal, state and local level, policy-makers need to hear from you. In practical terms, that means in addition to publishing in scholarly journals, researchers with significant new findings should attempt to find outlets for publication that go beyond the academic community, and are likely to actually be read by decision-makers and people close to them. It means inviting officials to witness first-hand the problems you are facing and the successes you are achieving in working with troubled children. It also means communicating directly with policy-makers and their staffs in meetings or through succinct, well-documented letters. Obviously, they may not always use the information in the way you think they should – knowledge is not always power – but at least they will have been confronted with the facts.

There is still much to be learned about the emotional disorders of children, and the questions facing the research community are enormously challenging. But no less important is the task of moving the political processes within government, and the private sector toward a more effective mental health system for children based on what we already know.

Submitted by:
Anthony W. Jackson, Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development; formerly: Senior Staff Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families, U.S. House of Representatives.

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EXPANDING THE HORIZON: SIBLING CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ECOLOGICAL MODEL

by: Sharon Farago Cramer

Time is the enemy of the classroom teacher. Excellent ideas – such as involvement of siblings of individuals with emotional disabilities in the assessment, implementation, and evaluation of programming in the special education setting – may be considered too costly to implement. How can the classroom teacher determine when to put day-to-day responsibilities aside for aspects of the program which may be considered supplemental? Yet, inclusion of siblings in the educational process may be of great benefit to the student who is emotionally disabled.

In one of the examinations of the ecological model of emotional disturbance, Apter and Conoley (1984) provided four assumptions for the design of intervention guidelines, which can be used to determine the potential benefit of sibling involvement. Each assumption is examined below.

Assumption #1:
Each child is an inseparable part of a small social system.

While this assumption is usually applied to the school setting, it is also relevant to the student's family situation. In keeping with Apter's ecological perspective, Burgess (1926) identified the family as "a unity of interacting personalities . . . a living, changing, growing thing" (p. 5). Teacher understanding of the family and its impact upon the learner is essential for effective special education, and the involvement of siblings may be especially valuable. How well can a teacher be expected to accurately understand family structure after talking with only a parent? With only the student? A more realistic picture may be obtained by talking with siblings as well as other family members. At present, interest in sibling interaction within the family system is being pursued through observation (Stoneman, Brody, Davis & Crapps, 1987) and through written evaluation (Farago, 1983).

What kind of information can siblings provide which is different from that obtained from parents? Siblings can provide unique perspectives regarding the ways the family affects its members. Investigating these concerns for siblings without disabilities, professionals can raise questions relevant to the special classroom teacher. The questions help to illuminate the small social system of which the student is a part at home. Relevant questions are: What does loyalty to the family mean in terms of behavior in school? How do expectations regarding closeness or intimacy influence the relationship which the student has with others in the classroom, and with the teacher? How do identity issues originating in the family influence the participation of a student with emotional disabilities in the classroom? What issues related to dependency in the family are important for the teacher of students with emotional disabilities to understand? Increased understanding of the home and family environment can enable the classroom teacher to better meet the needs of the student with emotional disabilities in the school setting. Teacher communication with and support for siblings can also enhance teacher understanding of interpersonal relationships within the home environment. Discussing a variety of sibling coalitions, Bank & Kahn (1975) illustrated how the power balance within the family can be directly influenced by siblings. Through investigation of such power relationships, the teacher may be able to get a more accurate picture of psychological resources available in the home which may facilitate change. In recent works (Bank & Kahn, 1982; Carter & McGoldrick, 1980), the impact of the sibling bond across the life cycle has also received attention. Supporting sibling relationships by seeking and using information about the ways in which siblings interact at home, the teacher may assist siblings to develop stronger relationships facilitating psychological and behavioral well-being.

The classroom teacher aspiring to develop a holistic understanding of the student with emotional disabilities can often obtain relevant information from siblings. The teacher can include siblings when soliciting information from home using questionnaires or interest inventories. Sibling participation in parent/school night should also be encouraged. Siblings may be interested in the kind of program being offered in the classroom, and may be able to draw parallels between home and the classroom concerns. The teacher is furthermore advised to encourage the child with emotional disabilities to include siblings when portraying the family in drawings, writings, and home contracts. The teacher should consider helping the student with emotional disabilities to include siblings when setting personal goals and when writing compositions and journals. This activity will contribute to what is known about the family as a social system.

Assumption #2:
Disturbance is not viewed as a disease located within the body of the child but, rather, as a discordance (a lack of balance) in the system.

This assumption is one central to the ecological model, and has helped many educators to consider the organizational strengths and deficits which exist within their classrooms. Instead of identifying students as having difficulties, the educator is forced to look at systematic problems contributing to disturbed or disturbing behaviors.

The literature illustrates ways in which a similar view can be taken of family difficulties. Role conflicts may serve to sustain emotional and behavioral problems. Bossard (1956) spoke with adult members of large family systems, and asked them to reflect on their childhoods. Roles played within the family system – separate from age of the child, gender, or birth order – were recalled by family members with vivid, often poignant detail; and, these complex roles were often seen to have influenced many aspects of family life. Sutton-Smith and Rosenberg (1970) have documented roles which family members take, and which may be important for the teacher of students with emotional and behavioral problems to understand.

Siblings of students with emotional disabilities may well be rich resources of information regarding the dynamics within the home, and they may reveal ways in which imbalance in family role-relationships affect the child's capabilities and concerns. Siblings can also serve as resource persons who may, with teacher involvement, help to change patterns of discordance.

The teacher should strive to develop an effective working relationship with the parents, so that input from siblings can be obtained routinely. The teacher should clarify expectations for communication with parents and siblings at the beginning of the year, so that contact with siblings regarding planning and implementation of simple activities can be done without making the parent feel defensive. This can serve as the basis for obtaining information from siblings on more sensitive topics, providing a more holistic view of the family system. Sibling involvement in the student's overall program could be a basis for even more active participation. Resource persons in local agencies may provide opportunities for siblings to form discussion groups, and to utilize programs such as "Sibshop" for discussion among siblings (Meyer, Vadasy, & Fewell, 1985).

Assumption #3:
Discordance may be defined as disparity between an individual's abilities and the demands or expectations of the environment: "failure to match" between the child and the system.

Expectations which parents have for the child with emotional disabilities, and for siblings, may in many cases be unrealistic. As Featherstone (1980) suggests, family expectations for children with disabilities should be flexible, revised as necessary and reconsidered in an ongoing manner. Expectations for the child without disabilities in that family system must also be flexible. As many books about family life illustrate, parent and teacher adaptation to the changing needs of children is essential.

What role can siblings play in this process? They can help the classroom teacher consider a variety of possibilities for adapting a classroom program to the needs of the student with emotional disabilities. They may in some cases be able to help implement some of the interventions. Studies by Powell et al. (1983) and Fox and Savelle

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(1987) illustrate the effectiveness of family-based interventions. Involvement of siblings in clarifying parental expectations and participation by siblings in shaping new behaviors can be effective. As indicated by Fox and Savelle, however, there are inconsistent findings in the overall outcomes for the sibling-intervention studies, suggesting a need for caution before involving siblings directly in intervention programs.

The classroom teacher can ask siblings without impairment how they may be of help to their brother or sister with emotional disabilities. Their ideas about ways they could help their siblings in school may be valuable. They may provide information which will facilitate translation of school goals into home tasks or activities. They may develop ways to help their siblings practice newly learned behaviors at home.

Siblings and parents should be involved in reality-checks of expectations in the classroom. Sibling and parent involvement in initial setting of expectations through the I.E.P. process can become the basis for regular, ongoing participation, helping the teacher link school and home activities. The teacher should ask siblings and parents to provide input in the development of classroom plans, so that school work coincides with home activities. This can help students generalize learning and behavioral expectations in two environments of concern.

Assumption #4:
The Goal of any intervention is to make the system work; and to make it work, ultimately, without intervention.

Sibling involvement in the overall program for the child with emotional disabilities, while initially cumbersome, may eventually produce a more coordinated, streamlined approach to serving students. By maximizing the ways in which siblings provide input and become involved in program development and implementation, stresses and strains within and between classroom and home ecologies may be relieved. After the initial investment of costly hours planning for sibling involvement there will likely be a payoff in dividends, enabling teachers to make the home/school connection more comprehensive and effective.

Submitted by:
Sharon Farago Cramer, Assistant Professor of Exceptional Education at State University College at Buffalo.

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The ANYSEED Executive Board, at their Annual Business Meeting, put forth the slate of officers which appears below:

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ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES FOR EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED STUDENTS

by Mark Posluszny

A belief held by many individuals responsible for working with children and youth who exhibit disturbing behavior is that a thorough understanding and explanation of the nature of the disturbed behavior is prerequisite to effective instruction. To help understand and explain disturbing behaviors exhibited by students, professionals utilize a variety of assessment procedures that typically include but are not limited to standardized tests (e.g., intelligence, achievement, diagnostic), behavior rating scales, observational procedures, and clinical interviews.

The specific type of instruments and procedures used in the assessment process, however, vary greatly. A major reason for this is the existence of alternative theoretical and conceptual models of emotional disturbance. Within each theoretical/conceptual model unique definitions of the disorder, hypotheses regarding etiology, corresponding treatment goals, and general intervention approaches are provided. Very often, the specific instruments and procedures used in assessment are selected because they provide information related to discrete hypotheses. These hypotheses generally relate to the etiology and treatment of the disturbed behavior in a given model.

Information obtained through assessment is typically used for two distinct purposes. First, it is used to help make legal decisions which certify that a student meets the criteria for ED and thus is eligible to receive special education services. Second, the information is used to justify the establishment of broad treatment goals and to prescribe a general approach to treatment that corresponds with the theoretical orientation.

Practitioners responsible for developing individualized educational programs for heterogeneous groups of ED students generally find this type of explanation and understanding of the nature of disordered behavior to be of limited value. The practitioner needs information that helps determine exactly what to teach the student and how best to teach it. Traditional assessment data do not assist in making these all-important instructional decisions.

In recent years alternative assessment procedures based upon an ecological perspective have gained support and have become increasingly popular among professionals (Kauffman, 1981; Kerr & Nelson, 1986; McLoughlin & Lewis, 1986; Prieto & Rutherford, 1977). The major reason for this interest lies in the usefulness of ecological assessment data in helping to make instructional decisions. Ecological assessment data provide the practitioner with understandings and explanations of behavior that have very direct implications for interventions.

Assumptions Regarding Ecological Assessment

As in other models, the ecological model provides hypotheses regarding the etiology of disturbing behavior. Simply stated, the major hypothesis of the ecological model is that the etiology of disturbing behavior lies in the mismatch between the behavior of the student and the constraints imposed by the environment (McLoughlin & Lewis, 1986). As such, disturbing behavior is not merely the actions of the student. Rather, it reflects undesirable interactions and transactions among the student, other people, and the physical environment (Kauffman, 1981).

Consistent with this perspective, Hammill (1986) outlined four assumptions that are central to ecological assessment. First, academic learning and social responding interact. From an ecological perspective overt behaviors, both adaptive and maladaptive, do not occur in a vacuum. Rather, they are highly related to situational variables. Second, different situations in school place different expectations on students. In many cases different skills are necessary for students to be successful in each of these situations. Third, different situations usually have different physical arrangements and different individuals present. Fourth, any given situation can be viewed differently by a variety of individuals.

Given these assumptions, it becomes apparent that if disturbing behavior is to be explained and understood, assessment procedures must provide information about a wide range of variables that are specific to the context in which the disturbing behavior is occurring.

Variables of Interest

As in traditional assessment, one major component of ecological assessment involves examination of student variables. The variables of interest include the disturbing, maladaptive and the appropriate adaptive behaviors of both the student being assessed and the other students in the class. These student variables are studied in terms of their relevant dimensions (i.e., frequency, rate, duration, intensity) and the context in which they occur.

The other major component of ecological assessment involves examination of environmental variables. These variables include factors relating to the instructional, social, and physical environments of the student. Instructional variables of concern are the curriculum selected for the student, and the methods and materials used during instruction. Social variables of concern are the standards, rules, and expectations of the teacher(s), and the corresponding management system used in the classroom. Physical variables of concern are the location of the student (i.e., seating and instructional arrangements), size and composition of the group, and other aspects of the environment that may be related to the behavior such as lighting, noise, and distractions.

Ecological Assessment Procedures

Ecological assessment procedures involve the use of observational strategies, informal interviews, and criterion referenced tests to obtain various types of information about a variety of student and environmental variables. The specific steps listed provide a description of the types of information needed and the procedures that can be used to obtain that information. The teacher should:

1. **Delineate problem situations.** The first step requires a listing of each school-related activity or situation in which the student is exhibiting disturbing behavior. To obtain this information each activity or situation in which the student is involved should be listed. The listing should include traditional academic classes or lessons such as reading, math, and spelling. Non-academic situations (e.g., lunchroom, physical education class) and non-academic activities (e.g., transitional period, recess) should also be included.

   Instructional and/or supervisory personnel in each situation should then be asked to judge whether or not the student is exhibiting expected academic and non-academic behaviors. This can be accomplished in a variety of different ways. The simplest method involves a categorization of the student's behaviors and interactions in each setting as either positive or negative.
2. **Operationally define problem behaviors.** Once problem activities or situations are identified, problem behaviors in these settings must be operationally defined. The problem behaviors may include academic behaviors (e.g., incorrect math computations, incomplete assignments) or non-academic behaviors. Operational definitions require descriptions of the behavior in observable and measurable terms. For example, rather than stating that a student is disruptive during lunch in the cafeteria, an operational definition might specify that the student pushes other students, throws food, and refuses to return the lunch tray to the dish window. Information necessary to write an operational definition can be obtained by either interviewing instructional and supervisory personnel or by directly observing the student in the problem situation.
3. **Measure the level of the behavior.** After operational definitions are written, appropriate measurement systems and instruments

must be selected and used to quantify the behavior. Most types of non-academic behavior can be measured by using event recording, duration recording, or time sampling procedures during observations (Sulzer-Azaroff & Mayer, 1977). The specific measurement system should be selected after considering factors such as number, dimensions, and rate of behaviors as well as ease of use. As a general rule, the disturbing behaviors should be observed and measured for at least five days or until a stable level has been observed. Academic behaviors should be measured by either administering and scoring criterion referenced tests or by reviewing and scoring work samples.

In addition to measuring the level of behavior exhibited by the student in question, the level of the same behavior of the other students in the class should be measured at the time and in the same manner. By measuring the behavior of both the student in question and the other students who are not perceived as problematic, comparisons can be made which will indicate the degree to which the problem student's behavior deviates from the norm. The level of behavior exhibited by the non-problem students can also be used to establish realistic criterion levels.

4. **Determine the context in which the disturbing behavior is exhibited.** Since it is assumed that disturbing behavior does not occur in a vacuum, it is important to identify situational variables that may precipitate and maintain disturbing behaviors. One method of accomplishing this is by observing and documenting each behavior, the time it occurs, the setting in which it takes place, the on-going activity, the people present, and the materials being used.

   A second method of identifying related situational variables is through the use of narrative recordings and sequence analyses (Reese, Howard, & Reese, 1977). Narrative recording requires an observer to transcribe the actions of a student in chronological order and note the verbal exchanges and non-verbal interactions between the student and the other persons in that setting. After the observation and narrative recording is completed, the entire episode is sequenced into a three-column format. In the center column, each verbal and non-verbal behavior of the student is listed in chronological order. To the left of each behavior, the events and actions of others that took place immediately prior to the behavior are listed in the antecedent column. To the right of each behavior, the events and actions of others that took place immediately after the behavior are listed in the consequence column. After several observations are recorded and sequenced in this manner, these data can be analyzed by identifying recurring antecedents and consequences to both appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Any patterns detected may indicate factors that precipitate the disturbing behavior and consequences that support both disturbing and appropriate behavior exhibited by the student.
5. **Determine the expectancies for non-academic behavior.** Within each setting, there exist differing expectancies for student behavior. In some situations the expectancies are communicated clearly to the student in the form of rules that are posted for all to see. In other situations, the rules governing student behavior are ambiguous or nonexistent. In each problem situation, the rules and expectancies for student behavior should be stated explicitly. The easiest method of determining the rules is by interviewing the teacher or person responsible for supervision in each problem situation.
6. **Determine academic expectancies.** Within each academic situation, teachers have expectancies for a student's academic behavior. These expectancies relate to development of certain skills, behavior during lessons (e.g., copying, reading, producing written answers, verbal responding), and behavior used to demonstrate mastery of skills. In some circumstances, disturbing behavior may be related to the student's failure to meet these expectancies.

   Assessment of academic expectancy involves an examination of the prescribed curriculum, materials, instructional activities, and methods being used (McLoughlin & Lewis, 1986). The assessment process should provide information about the appropriateness of the skills targeted for development and the materials relative to the student. The instructional methods and activities should be reviewed to determine their relationship to the established goals and objectives, their effectiveness in facilitating skill development, and the extent to which they are based upon principles of effective instruction. This information can be obtained by interviewing students and teachers, examining curricular materials, observing lessons, and examining student work samples.
7. **Assess the management system.** An important aspect of any situation within a school setting is the management system being used. In many cases, ineffective management systems are at least partially responsible for the occurrence of disturbing behavior. In assessing the management system in any situation, it is important to determine the consequences for inappropriate behavior, the consequences for appropriate behavior, and the extent to which the consequences are delivered consistently. Another important consideration is the student's awareness of the consequences of inappropriate behavior. Information about the management system can be obtained by interviewing teachers and students and by direct observation.
8. **Assess the physical environment.** Certain aspects of the physical environment may be related to the occurrence of disturbing behavior. Each problem situation should be examined relative to the following factors: sound, physical arrangement, movement efficiency, flexibility and density (Lewis & Doorleg, 1983). Information about each of these factors can be obtained by interviewing teachers and students and by direct observation.

Utilizing Assessment Data

After completing the assessment process, the information on the various student and environmental variables must be carefully reviewed and analyzed. This resulting review and analysis should result in the generation of hypotheses regarding the functional relationships between the student's overt behavior and various environmental variables. Based upon these hypotheses, intervention strategies can be designed to increase the student's competencies, to change the expectations in the problem settings, or to concurrently increase competencies and change expectations (Prieto & Rutherford, 1977). By continuing the measurement of disturbing behavior, the efficacy of the interventions and validity of the hypotheses can be empirically evaluated.

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Getting out a journal is fun, but it's no picnic.

If we print jokes, people say we are silly;

If we don't, they say we are too serious.

If we clip things from other magazines, we are too lazy to write them ourselves;

If we don't, then they say that we are too proud of our own stuff.

If we don't print contributions, we don't appreciate true genius;

If we do print them, the page is filled with junk.

Now, very likely, someone will say that we swiped this from someone else—WE DID!

THE ECOLOGY OF HELPING: CONFLICT OR COLLABORATION?

by Charles A. Chrystal

Introduction

Teachers and professional helpers who deal with emotionally disturbed students recognize that there are many perspectives on the educational and psychological problems those pupils possess. Some hold the student responsible for his difficulties; some do not. Some view the student as capable of finding solutions to his difficulties; some impose solutions upon the student. The perceptions adults have of the student with problems are sometimes complimentary, sometimes conflictual. Understanding the ecology of helping styles – that is, why perspectives on helping mesh or clash – may enable teachers and other concerned professionals to provide psychoeducational services to emotionally disturbed students more efficiently and effectively.

The ecological perspective is most generally concerned with what goes on between people within known settings. Within the microsystem of the classroom (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), what occurs between teacher and student is most germane. Where helping is concerned, however, the situation is rarely a simple affair: it involves not only teacher and student, but also, administrators, parents, specialists, peers, and "miscellaneous others." Each has a different view of the student and his problem, and each may give input which clouds the waters of helping. The responsible adult attempting to make sense of it all frequently becomes frustrated trying to decide which view of the student and his problem is the "right" one, and often takes the path of least resistance when it comes to intervention. Unfortunately, the path of least resistence may be one which leads nowhere.

Understanding individual "helping styles" as these characterize would-be helpers involved in the educational enterprise may aid the professional responsible for intervention to work most efficiently, compromising when that is in the best interest of the student and communicating effectively with those who express opinions regarding "what should be done" to aid the student. The reasons *why* orientations towards helping clash or coincide may be particularly useful information for the responsible professional to comprehend. It is the purpose of this paper to examine approaches to helping, to suggest why conflicts among helpers may occur, and to discuss how disagreements regarding intervention may be resolved.

The Ecology of Helping

Helping Styles

Four helping styles are readily recognizable, and each may enter into the helping process. The moral, medical, compensatory and enlightenment approaches to helping advanced by Brickman et al. (1982) have been described elsewhere (Chrystal, 1987; Morse, 1985), and are summarized below. It is noted that while professional helpers may employ more than one of the helping styles discussed, it is likely that most prefer – or fall back on – a predominant style. Thus, it is important to understand how each of the styles of helping described may manifest itself in behavior.

Moral style. The helper as moralist views students with problems as responsible for the problems they confront *and* for finding solutions to their problems. Each student is viewed as the "captain of his fate" as far as emotional and behavioral stability is concerned. The moralist admires strength in the face of adversity, and takes the existentialist position that human beings are essentially alone in their quests for personal meaning and dignity. The helper's function is to provide verbal but not material support for the student whose life is of his own making.

Medical style. The helper with a medical orieniation sees students as *neither* responsible for their problems *nor* as responsible for finding solutions to those problems. The student is viewed as emotionally disturbed or behaviorally disordered through no fault of his own, and he may be best helped by experts imposing treatments. The student is the passive recipient of help: through therapy, medical intervention, or behavioral methods deemed beneficial. The medical style may foster dependency in the student receiving help, who necessarily relies upon the expertise of adults to improve his condition.

Enlightenment style. The helper who takes an enlightenment approach perceives students as responsible for the problems they possess, but *not* for finding solutions to those difficulties. Students may have created problems for themselves and others, but cannot be expected to salvage themselves. Rather, they must submit to discipline imposed by adults. Students viewed from this perspective are "bad apples" in need of strong "guidance," direction, or correction. In its extreme form, the enlightenment approach may become punitive.

Compensatory style. The compensatory approach to helping views students as essentially "blameless" insofar as the origins of their emotional and behavioral problems are concerned, *but* as ultimately responsible for the outcome of their own lives. The student with the problem is thus viewed as a "good" person who is in need of support. Assistance may be verbal or material in nature, but is offered rather than imposed. The helper thus takes an optimistically facilitative and nonintrusive stance towards the student with problems, who is viewed as capable of using such support to overcome his personal dilemmas.

Conflict or Collaboration ?

Professional helpers who deal with emotionally disturbed and behaviorally disordered students typically favor one of the helping styles described above, despite the fact that some flexibility in addressing student problems is characteristic. When two or more helpers agree in their perspectives regarding the student's responsibility for problem and solution, the ecology of helping is stable and an intervention can be selected collaboratively and without delay. When helpers *disagree* regarding student responsibility for the problem or solution, however, the ecology of helping lacks stability. Such systemic discordance may impede intervention planning and implementation. It is important that disagreements in approach be understood. Disagreements may arise regarding the student's (1) responsibility for problems, (2) responsibility for solutions, and (3) both responsibility for problems *and* for solutions. These disagreements may not be readily apparent, but may nevertheless affect efforts aimed at benefitting the student in school or classroom.

Responsibility for problems. Disagreements regarding the student's responsibility for his problems crop up between *moralists* and *enlightenment-oriented* helpers, both of whom hold the student responsible for his predicament, and *medical* and *compensatory* helpers, neither of whom view the student as the responsible party, but rather, as a victim of circumstance. Moral and enlightenment helpers may look at the student with a jaundiced eye, questioning how "serious" presenting problems are and suggesting – directly or indirectly – that the student has "asked for" the problems he presents. Medical and compensatory helpers may find themselves defending the student as an "innocent party" who has been inflicted with problems by virtue of biology, upbringing, socioeconomic status, etc. Sparring between helpers regarding the origin of the student's problems may create intractable communication difficulties, rendering effective intervention improbable if not impossible.

Responsibility for solutions. *Enlightenment* and *medically-oriented* helpers may disagree with *moral* and *compensatory* helpers regarding involvement of the student in working towards resolution of his problems. The former helpers may be heavily invested in planning and implementing interventions, whereas the latter helpers may seek to place responsibility for change on the student. Philosophical differences regarding the "reactive" (i.e., mechanistic) or "proactive" (self-directed) nature of human behavior are commonplace, and if

helpers become rigid adherents of one or the other point of view, such differences may impede or even prevent service delivery.

Responsibility for problems and responsibility for solutions. The probability of "classic" confrontation and conflict exists when helpers differ regarding both student responsibility for problems and for solutions. *Moral* helpers may clash with helpers espousing the *medical* model, and *enlightenment* helpers may be challenged by their *compensatory* counterparts. Such conflicts are the stuff that conferences and committee meetings are made of (and often add excitement to otherwise humdrum proceedings), yet have a very detrimental effect upon psychoeducational intervention and staff relationships within the mesosystem of the school (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Perhaps most familiar to educators is the enlightenment-oriented colleague or parent who insists that "all those troublemakers need is a little discipline," with the implicit message that students are not being adequately controlled within the classroom. Most teachers are understandably disturbed by such statements, and may attempt to argue that students with problems need something "more" than simple discipline. Helpers who are compensatory in their approach to helping may find themselves heatedly debating the desirability of disciplinary approaches to student problems, however, alienating themselves from the colleague or parent in the process.

Helpers who are moralistic in their orientation seem much less prevalent in the schools, but may nevertheless cause more commonplace medically-oriented helpers much exasperation. Moral helpers are likely to perceive their medical counterparts as overly engaged or even enmeshed in the helping process. Helpers favoring the medical model are likely to view moralists as distant, aloof, underinvolved, and uncaring. Moralists and medical helpers come to view each other suspiciously. Erosion of mutual respect assures that students with problems will experience inconsistent intervention with little probability of successful outcome.

Dealing with Conflict/ Working Towards Collaboration

It should be clear from the discussion above that while conflict makes professionals uncomfortable, there is only one loser: the student with problems. Collaboration between helpers is necessary if special education services are to be delivered to emotionally disturbed and behaviorally disordered pupils efficiently and with optimum impact. As Apter and Conoley (1984) have noted, the ecologist's goal is to "make the system work" by alleviating discordance within that system. This is precisely what we are about here.

In helping, as elsewhere, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" when it comes to conflict. The most effective helping professionals develop a nose for potential conflict and seek to avoid philosophical warfare through subtle persuasion, efforts at attitudinal change, and compromise.

It is perhaps most important that the person most responsible for helping the student with problems recognize and acknowledge that there are many valid ways of providing help. In practical terms, that means that the helper must *accept*—without sanction and certainly without wincing—suggestions from others which may not be helpful, or which may be viewed as detrimental. Once *accepted*, such suggestions can be questioned in a circumspect manner, and alternatives for action discussed. "Unreasonable" perceptions of the student and his predicament may be challenged, albeit diplomatically. Above all, the helper must aid the other person involved to make a contribution to the helping process, no matter how trivial. The person's "ownership" of at least part of the intervention is the best insurance for his continuing support of the change effort, and serves to restore equilibrium to ecology of helping.

The helper who comprehends the four helping styles described above—and who is aware of the implications of his own approach—is in the best position to work through disagreements relative to intervention. The *moral* helper is likely to be most concerned with the student's capacity for self-direction; the *medically-oriented* helper, with the student's deficits and passive acceptance of "expert" helping. The *enlightenment* helper may be most concerned with discipline, how it should be imposed upon the student and by whom. The *compensatory* helper may be concerned with the student's utilization of available resources for self-help. Understanding helping styles facilitates role-taking and fosters empathy in face-to-face communication, minimizing the potential for conflict.

Sometimes, however, conflict cannot be avoided. The adult most responsible for providing help then must choose to (1) negotiate a "solution" with involved others, or (2) go it alone. The first option is by far the most desirable, if ethical practice permits. Problem-solving, *quid pro quo* agreements, and similar strategies may be employed to stabilize the ecosystem providing help, and to set the stage for more cooperative working relationships among helpers. Lauer and Handel (1977) describe the role-relationships common to negotiation within the framework of symbolic interactionism.

The discussion above assumes that adults are working together to aid the student with emotional or behavioral problems. Often, however, the teacher or other adult will want to work directly with the student receiving services. A cooperative and collaborative working relationship which recognizes the student's orientation towards receiving help is essential. Does the student anticipate a long, lonely struggle towards self-betterment? Discipline? An expert who will "fix" his problems? A supportive, but non-directive counselor? What do the expectations of the student say about his history, abilities, needs, and wants? Should the student's expectations for help be changed, and if so, in what manner? And—a most important question—what types of help are available? The concerned adult will want to select a strategy which addresses the student's unique needs, and which also restores balance to the ecology of helping.

Through careful analysis of the needs of the student with emotional and behavioral problems, school-based professionals including teachers, administrators, specialists, and others, can find effective means for providing help. Knowledge of the helping styles involved parties bring to the microsystem of concern which surrounds the pupil may enable concerned practitioners to find approaches to intervention which maintain social and organizational equilibrium, facilitate cooperation among professionals, and promote effective and efficient delivery of special educational services to individual students.

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